CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.699
23 February 1995

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND NINETY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 February 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Alessandro Vattani (Italy)

GE.95-60534 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 699th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Argentina and the Russian Federation. However, before giving them the floor, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to the newly appointed heads of the delegations of Japan, Ambassador Hisani Kurokochi, and China, Ambassador Sha Zukang, who are both with us for the first time today. I should like to take this opportunity to assure them of our full cooperation in the discharge of their responsibilities.

I should now like to give the floor to the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Sánchez Arnau.

Mr. SANCHEZ ARNAU (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): First of all, Mr President, I would like to convey to you my sincere congratulations for the determination and impartiality with which you have guided our work throughout this complex period of your term of office as President on the Conference on Disarmament, and, accordingly, to reaffirm our delegation's willingness to persevere in the difficult task confronting us. I also wish to welcome the presence of the new representative of Japan, Ambassador Kurokochi, and the new representative of China, Ambassador Sha.

Since the restoration of democracy in our country, Argentina has adopted a clear and committed position on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have opted for transparency and reliability, discarding other approaches whose real effects were reflected in less security for the region and for the world and the risk of technological isolation for our own country. In this context, President Carlos Menem announced in December 1993 that Argentina would become a new party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), before the 1995 review and extension Conference. On 10 February 1995, just a few days ago, we deposited the instrument of ratification with the Government of the United States of America, thus keeping that promise after completing all the domestic constitutional requirements. The NPT is the only non-proliferation agreement of worldwide scope and, as such, forms the main international political and legal barrier to the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons. As such, it has helped to isolate those countries which, within or outside its area of operation, have persisted in trying to acquire nuclear weapons. It is the only multilateral arms control agreement that binds its parties to pursue measures of disarmament, and provides a framework and firm foundation for such efforts. It strikes a balance of obligations between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, and in no way legitimizes the permanent possession of such weapons.

On a matter of very close concern to my country, let me affirm that the NPT is an essential instrument in support of the world system for the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy - subject, of course, to effective international safeguards. In this connection we have in mind the obligation of the States parties to the NPT to sign full-scope safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency - agreements which we regard as an important security assurance for all our countries - and the no

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

less important fact that the validity of those agreements is linked to the validity of the Treaty. In this area we consider it necessary to strengthen the system of safeguards in order to adapt it to present-day requirements. In that connection, I need only mention that the comprehensive safeguards agreement in force between Argentina and Brazil, ABACC (the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) and IAEA is regarded by IAEA as more comprehensive than those so far signed directly by parties to the NPT. We consider it essential for the forthcoming review and extension Conference to reaffirm that agreements on full-scope safeguards are a vital prerequisite for any supply of nuclear material or technology to non-nuclear-weapon States. We hold that the transfer of advanced technologies with military applications should be properly protected and guaranteed through the existing systems of control and exchange of information. We therefore abide, in our threefold capacity as a new party, as an exporter and as a developer of nuclear technology and materials, by the directives of the export control systems as a prerequisite for world peace and stability.

As Ambassador Marín Bosch said in his statement on 31 January, what is accomplished - or not accomplished - in New York at the forthcoming meeting to review the NPT will "shape or reshape the manner in which the international community approaches nuclear non-proliferation". What is more, it will either facilitate or not facilitate the continuation of the process of nuclear weapons destruction already undertaken by the nuclear Powers. Such weapons, fortunately, are in few hands, and there is no doubt that their presence contributed to the fact that the cold war ultimately ended without bloodshed and with the result desired by those who love peace and democracy. We believe that the NPT has played a supremely important part in this process of limiting proliferation, at any rate so far as the number of nuclear countries is concerned. To deprive ourselves of this instrument now for reasons having to do with perception of the future evolution of the world political situation, or with imbalances that would not even be redressed by terminating the instrument, would mean inviting risks which seem to us immeasurably greater than the problems such a step would allegedly solve. Argentina will therefore come to the review and extension Conference with two overriding objectives: to call for its indefinite and unconditional extension and to seek to improve and strengthen its system of verification. At the same time we think that the most important of all nuclear disarmament measures in the present circumstances is a comprehensive test-ban treaty (our CTBT). Let us therefore ensure non-proliferation once and for all by extending the NPT indefinitely and unconditionally, and let us continue to work for disarmament, moving forward in the negotiation of the CTBT and encouraging the nuclear Powers to continue, to the extent permitted by the development of the international political situation, the process of destroying existing nuclear weapons. Let us work seriously for an international convention prohibiting the future production of fissile materials for military purposes, and let us see how and when the problem of existing stocks can reasonably be tackled. Let us work for the development of security assurances. Although we do not think that we have reached the hoped-for goals in this matter, we do believe that a resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council might give rise to a rule prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices against non-nuclear-weapon States, which would be provided with a legally binding and verifiable undertaking on

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

non-proliferation. We shall thus consolidate the current process of disarmament, which is demonstrating the possibility of reversing the armaments spiral in a far shorter time than the nuclear arsenals took to develop.

This year we shall have our only opportunity to make the NPT a permanent part of the international security system. We are confident that we shall succeed in extending it indefinitely, in the realization that any other extension in the future could be arrived at only by amending the Treaty - something very difficult if not impossible in this field to achieve in the prevailing international political circumstances. The extension of the NPT in 1995 is a decision with tremendous consequences for international security and for our own security as non-nuclear-weapon States. If the future of the NPT were uncertain, that would lead us to the collapse of the only legal and political barrier to the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons.

I wish now to refer to the work of this Conference on Disarmament. We regret that, as we near the end of February, we have been able to decide on the establishment of only a single ad hoc committee, albeit one of the greatest importance since it concerns the CTBT. This, as I said on a previous occasion, is very difficult to justify inasmuch as it affects the work of this Conference. We do not doubt the importance of continuing negotiations on outer space, negative security assurances and transparency in armaments. This last is the very point to which I would like to refer briefly once more. We all know that the search for greater transparency in international relations cannot be limited to the field of weapons of mass destruction or related technologies. Conventional weapons, which are those actually used in regional conflicts nowadays, should also be the subject of measures to afford transparency in this very complex and delicate field. In the course of 1994 we had new working papers before us. Several proposals were made which we consider interesting, such as the British proposal on the volume and organization of armed forces, the Italian proposal on declaration of the closure or conversion of military equipment installations, the proposals by Japan and New Zealand concerning regional transparency and transparency in the sphere of controls on exports of conventional military equipment and technologies. Other important topics also arose in the course of discussion, such as international guidelines for transfers of conventional weapons, and national means of production. As we see it, several of these topics could not be tackled in sufficient depth.

My country firmly believes that transparency in conventional weapons is a subject that the Conference should continue to study. Although there are agreements in force, and others in the process of negotiation, to control or eliminate weapons of mass destruction, there is no comparable process for conventional weapons. We need to know openly what the difficulties are in this field. We do not believe that there is any valid reason for evading the issue; on the contrary, we have important reasons for tackling it positively. Transparency is vital in building confidence and helps to restrain the destabilizing and excessive stockpiling of conventional armaments: an objective of benefit to all regions of the world. It also strengthens international peace and security, contributes to preventive diplomacy and forms the basis of cooperative security. We know very well that the purchase of conventional weapons consumes more resources in the developing world than

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

programmes for mass destruction of weapons. These are resources which, given adequate measures of transparency, could be rechannelled into the economic and social area.

We have repeated several times that my country and the geographical region to which it belongs set a high value on this integrated process of transparency. Transparency and confidence-building measures go hand in hand and lay the indispensable foundation on which to face up fairly and squarely to the requirements imposed by the pursuit of processes of cooperation and integration. What is more, in the case of Argentina the measures developed with our neighbours at the regional level and the development of our thinking on security have enabled us to pass on 5 January last Act No. 24,429 on "voluntary" military service, replacing the former call-up system which was strictly compulsory. This transformation is based on the increasingly technical character of our armed forces in a context of stringent budgetary austerity. This has not prevented Argentina from making a sizeable contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations; it is at present the Latin American country taking the greatest part in operations of this kind.

The Conference on Disarmament affords an ideal opportunity to negotiate practical, realistic and useful measures on this subject. It can make contributions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and we should bear in mind that the measures devised and developed in this forum may be of worldwide and regional scope. Let us hope that in 1995 the CD will be able to build confidence and security between States in this field by taking up this topic with the responsibility and seriousness it requires.

Lastly, I wish to mention a subject that Argentina considers to be a matter of justice. I refer to the possible participation of Slovakia as a full member of the Conference to fill the vacancy left by Czechoslovakia two years ago. We all know that the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic agreed on their separation in a peaceful and civilized manner and in the same way agreed which of them was to succeed to membership of this Conference. All member and non-member States were informed of this situation in 1993 through notes from both countries, which are also Members of the United Nations. I believe we have all had enough time to study the case and that there is no justification for delaying any further this decision to include the Slovak Republic among the members of the Conference. Argentina considers that the Slovak Republic should succeed to the vacancy left by Czechoslovakia. This is the result of an equation involving elements of politics, law and fairness, in view of the agreement reached by the countries concerned.

Although this is a different matter from the foregoing, I would not wish to fail to mention the expansion of this Conference on Disarmament. We give our support to the idea of making new and serious efforts to expand the membership of this Conference, taking into account the terms of United Nations resolution 49/77 B, which was adopted by consensus. The Conference on Disarmament needs to keep up with the times in order to ensure that its work is carried out within a group of States representative of the moment of history we are living in and of the present international context. That is

(Mr. Sánchez Arnau, Argentina)

the best way to ensure that the international community will continue to adopt, and to promote universal accession to, the agreements which result from the efforts and negotiations of this Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Berdennikov.

Mr. BERDENNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you, as the Ambassador of Italy, with which my country enjoys friendly relations, on the success of your work in the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. We highly appreciate your efforts, which have allowed the Conference, under your leadership, to solve the main task it was facing, that is, resumption of the negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban Treaty. I also express my appreciation to the previous President of the CD, the Ambassador of Iran, Mr. Nasseri, for his efforts in the post of President of the Conference. I am also happy to welcome among us the Ambassadors of China, the Netherlands, Japan, Morocco, Myanmar, Indonesia and Brazil, who have recently arrived in Geneva, and to wish them success in their new endeavour.

In the view of the Russian delegation, one cannot but recognize that the main positive aspect of the new post-confrontation era has been a substantial reduction of the nuclear threat that used to be a "sword of Damocles" hanging over our planet. Thanks to a series of agreements on the limitation and reduction of strategic nuclear armaments reached between the former USSR, and later Russia, and the United States of America, the nuclear arms race was actually stopped and even reversed and - I weigh my words fully as I say this - no longer exists. Thus the commitment assumed by the States parties to the NPT in article VI, relating to "cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date", has been fulfilled. Specifically, within the framework of the projected reductions under the START I Treaty, as well as in accordance with the unilateral initiatives for the reduction of nuclear weapons announced in October 1991 and January 1992, the Russian Federation has eliminated more than 1,500 ICBMs and SLBMs and about 400 silo-based and rail-based ICBM launchers and has decommissioned from the Navy more than 15 atomic submarines with SLBM launchers. All heavy bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons have been taken out of combat service, and some of them have already been eliminated. In accordance with the INF Treaty, two classes of nuclear missiles - medium-range and shorter-range missiles - have already been eliminated. All tactical nuclear warheads previously deployed outside Russia have been repatriated and their destruction has begun. All tactical weapons have been removed from Navy ships, submarines and aviation. Production of nuclear warheads for ground-based tactical missiles, nuclear artillery shells and mines has completely stopped. We are determined to continue, together with other nuclear Powers, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in guaranteeing security, and to move in the direction of the eventual complete elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world, as provided for by United Nations decisions and stipulated in Russian military doctrine. We welcome the message of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. B. Boutros-Ghali, addressed to the Conference on Disarmament, and especially his call for "maintaining and even increasing the momentum created by the recent positive

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

developments in the field of arms regulation and disarmament". Indeed, such developments as the long-awaited accession of Ukraine to the NPT as a non-nuclear State, as well as the ratification by Ukraine, Kazakistan and Belarus of the START I Treaty, enabled that Treaty to enter into force. As a result, new, substantial reductions of the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States are becoming a reality. We also endorse the wish expressed in the message of the United Nations Secretary-General that other nuclear Powers will also become actively involved in the nuclear disarmament process, thus making their contribution to the establishment of a safer world.

Experience shows that the method of resolving problems related to nuclear weapons through bilateral agreements, very important though they may be, is effective only up to a certain limit. The inter-related character of nuclear problems calls for an integrated approach. It is these very considerations that led the Russian President to propose at the United Nations that the five nuclear States should draw up a treaty on nuclear security and strategic stability. The merit of such a treaty would reside in the fact that its subject would be the most important link in the nuclear chain - the materials and technology on which nuclear weapons rest. Of course, the nuclear arsenals of the five nuclear Powers are now different in size. This is why the projected measures could be implemented in stages, taking into account the specific characteristics of the nuclear potentials of particular countries, and allowing for their different obligations. During the first stages, while Russia and the United States would agree on further steps to reduce their nuclear forces, other nuclear States could undertake not to increase their existing nuclear armaments. It is also important that the treaty should contain a commitment on the part of all its parties not to put into service new kinds of strategic weapons that do not exist in their current arsenals.

The 1995 NPT review and extension Conference scheduled for April-May is one of the major international events of this decade. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a time-tested document that has made a most important contribution to the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, the preservation of stability and the creation of the necessary conditions for radical measures in the field of disarmament. The world is interdependent. The nuclear domain is no exception. It would be difficult to implement disarmament measures without the stability afforded by the Treaty. At the same time, genuine measures in pursuance of article VI, of which a good many have been adopted, especially with the end of the cold war, by my country among others, in turn enhance the strength of the Treaty. The steady growth in the number of parties to the Treaty during recent years confirms that the international community considers the Treaty as one that indisputably corresponds to its interests. Today, this is the treaty with the largest number of parties of all agreements in the field of arms limitation and reduction, its coverage coming close to that of the United Nations Charter. We hope that the NPT will become a truly universal Treaty.

Taking into account all these considerations Russia has made its choice and firmly favours the unlimited and unconditional extension of the non-proliferation Treaty at the April Conference. We call upon all countries to adopt the same stance and support action to make the NPT a treaty of unlimited duration. We are convinced that the unlimited and unconditional

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

and strategic stability and the further enhancement of the nuclear weapon non-proliferation regime. I would like to recall that in its military doctrine, approved by President B.N. Yeltsin in a decree, Russia declared its obligations regarding security assurances. The appropriate provision of the military doctrine reads as follows:

> "The Russian Federation will not use its nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1 July 1968, except in the event of: (a) an armed attack on the Russian Federation, its territory, its armed forces or other troops or its allies by such a State that is linked by an alliance with a nuclear-weapon State; (b) joint actions by such a State together with a nuclear-weapon State in conducting or supporting an incursion or armed attack on the Russian Federation, its territory, its armed forces or other troops or its allies."

Russia is also in favour of extending more precise "positive" security assurances to the non-nuclear States parties to the NPT, providing for appropriate assistance from the United Nations Security Council if they fall victim to a nuclear attack or blackmail. This inspired the Russian President's proposal for a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council at Foreign Minister level in order to agree on an updated Security Council resolution elaborating on the provisions of the well-known resolution 255 of 1968. Russia is also ready to work actively on the enhancement of assurances to non-nuclear States against the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against them - what are known as negative assurances. This relates in particular both to the drawing up of an international convention and to efforts to agree on a formula common to all nuclear States and containing such assurances which could be confirmed in an appropriate resolution of the United Nations Security Council. In our opinion the consultations being held among the five nuclear States are of particular importance for the success of this exercise. For its part, the Russian delegation is doing whatever is necessary to ensure that these consultations culminate in a tangible result.

The renewal of full-scale negotiations on a CTBT during the 1995 CD session should in no way distract us from a still unresolved issue - the re-establishment of the ad hoc committees on security assurances, transparency in armaments and prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Russian delegation favours the re-establishment of all the ad hoc committees that functioned last year as soon as possible so that they can pursue their activities. We do not share the approach of those who try to link all these issues within one package, and we believe that work on each of these topics is in itself worthy of support.

It is a matter of regret that the issue of the expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament is still unresolved. We are ready to support any decision that would lead to an increase in the number of participants in the Conference through the admission of those that have submitted applications. The consensus resolution of the forty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly could be a basis for such a decision. We also favour the prompt appointment of a special coordinator on this issue,

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

with due consideration of course to the principles of rotation and balance in the distribution of elected posts in the Conference among the different groups of States. In our opinion the future special coordinator should have a broad mandate and should not be constrained by former proposals and approaches, which, however attractive they seemed when they were tabled, have not been able to pull the membership expansion issue out of deadlock. We do not believe that it is absolutely necessary to stick to schemes that do not yield a practical result. This also applies to the "package" approach to the solution of this issue. In this context I would like to stress that, as we declared earlier, the issue of the admission of the Slovak Republic to CD membership is not related to the problem of expansion of the membership and is a separate and special case. We do not see any obstacle to the Slovak Republic's occupying as soon as possible, as agreed with the Czech Republic, the seat which formerly belonged to Czechoslovakia in the Conference on Disarmament, and we call on all the participants in the Conference to support a decision to that effect.

Practical results of the Conference are expected in the field of disarmament and arms control in order to safeguard international stability and security. It is towards that very objective that the Russian delegation intends to direct its efforts.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today.

I now draw your attention to the informal paper containing the tentative timetable of meetings for the Conference for next week, which was prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. As usual, it is merely indicative and subject to change if necessary. I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. ZNIBER (Morocco) (translated from French): I wish to make a brief statement on the calendar of meetings for next week. Would you allow me to do this now, Mr. President, as it is a rather important matter? Thank you.

Mr. President, you have had an informal paper distributed containing the timetable of meetings for next week. This timetable indicates that three meetings of the Conference are scheduled on Thursday, 2 March. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this date coincides with Id Al-Fitr, which brings to a close the holy month of Ramadan for all Muslims. In view of the spiritual importance attached to this event by the delegations of Muslim countries and the need to observe the necessary rest, my delegation would like the meetings planned for that date to be rescheduled in the timetable for next week. If it proves necessary, we could for instance hold next week's plenary meeting on Tuesday morning, 28 February.

I would like to point out that this request is based on United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/221 A, adopted on 23 December 1994. Allow me to quote paragraph 5 of this resolution in English:

(Mr. Zniber, Morocco)

(continued in English)

"[The General Assembly] invites United Nations bodies to avoid holding meetings on 2 March and 9 May 1995, and [also] invites the Secretariat, when drafting future calendars of conferences and meetings, to take these arrangements into account".

The PRESIDENT: I learned of this request this morning. Yesterday, at the Presidential consultations I was not informed about this very important event taking place on Thursday. Personally, I am sensitive to your request but I feel that, as President, I somehow have to listen to what is the indication which comes from the whole Conference. I would like to know if regional coordinators are able to accept this change so as to allow for the plenary to be rescheduled for Tuesday, 28 February as well as the other two working groups during next week. I would like to state that I checked with the secretariat this morning and it seems that in 1993 this request was agreed upon by the Conference, therefore there is a precedent. I would like to know if the coordinators can give an indication now or whether we can eventually ask the coordinators, once they have a position, to indicate to the secretariat so that we can inform the members of the Conference immediately, but I think that even if I am very sensitive to this request, that I am really in the hands of the members of the Conference. Through the regional coordinators and China I think that we can swiftly deal with such a delicate issue, but if the coordinators are capable of answering immediately - remember that there is a favourable precedent in 1993 - I will encourage them to do so at once. I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Ramaker.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Mr. President, as Coordinator of the Western Group, I cannot give you the answer that you would like to hear from me at this moment, but in five minutes' time maybe I could. Therefore, would it not be a good idea to simply suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that we can consult and then come back to this? It would seem to me that this is the most efficient solution.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your suggestion. I will now suspend the meeting in order to allow group coordinators to quickly get in touch with their members and also China and then in 15 minutes we will get the answer. I repeat that there was a favourable precedent in 1993 and it would be easy to organize the plenary on Tuesday.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I now have some first reactions from some regional coordinators but I will also invite the others to submit the results of their rapid consultations. The information I have to bring to the attention of the Conference is that the Commission on Human Rights is scheduled to meet on Thursday, when an important personality is scheduled to speak. That personality was planning to also come to speak at the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament on Thursday morning, and we learned about the request by Morocco only this morning. This is an information that I submit to you because if an organ of the United Nations, that is, the Commission on

(The President)

Human Rights, maintains the meeting on Thursday, if we, as an autonomous body, decide differently when we do have this scheduled visit, it would seem to me that perhaps it would be a little embarrassing. However, I will follow the method that you suggest. If there has not been enough time during the suspension, I am ready to have Presidential consultations this afternoon at 5 p.m. so that between now and then you will have time to consult further and we can check what is the situation of other United Nations bodies here in Geneva. I was really quite taken aback when I heard that there is a meeting scheduled to listen to the Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, who is due to speak on Thursday at the Commission on Human Rights.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Of course the Egyptian delegation fully supports what has been said by the delegation of Morocco, that the decision of the General Assembly to avoid holding meetings on two days, 2 March and 9 May, should be respected, and I do believe that it should have been taken into account by the secretariat and not by you personally as President of the Conference. It should normally be taken into account when the schedule of meetings is being prepared. And by the way, the same proposal as has been presented in the Conference on Disarmament will be made in the Commission on Human Rights. It will also be raised today in the Commission on Human Rights and so I hope that you will not let the matter worry you.

The PRESIDENT: I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Yumjav. May I first ask whether the regional groups have reached some decision so that we may conclude this issue?

Mr. YUMJAV (Mongolia): The Group of 21 fully supports the proposal made by the distinguished representative of Morocco. The CD should not hold meetings next Thursday, 2 March 1995, which coincides with a very important Islamic feast which is the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

The PRESIDENT: Is there any other regional coordinator who wishes to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Sha.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation is aware that Ramadan is the holy month for Muslims. We wish our Muslim colleagues well. We agree with the suggestion by the delegation of Morocco that corresponding adjustments should be made in our schedule. Any arrangements agreed among the parties concerned will have the endorsement of the Chinese delegation. Even if there are any difficulties, we will try our best to surmount them as far as the Chinese delegation is concerned. At the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President as well as the representatives of Argentina and Russia for their warm words of welcome addressed to me. The CD as an important multilateral disarmament negotiating forum is currently engaged in very important tasks of negotiation. In the course of fulfilling our joint mission I will cooperate fully with the President as well as other colleagues and hope that I will receive the cooperation and help of everyone at any time.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): The Western Group, of course, as a point of principle, holds the view that the CD is indeed an autonomous body and therefore General Assembly resolutions which could interfere with the work of the Conference are, as far as the Western Group is concerned, not relevant. Having said that, and having listened to the proposal made by the distinguished delegate of Morocco, the second point that I think is the prevailing feeling in the Western Group is that we regret that the proposal has been made a little late because it certainly causes some trouble - maybe not insurmountable trouble - for this Conference, but as you yourself suggested, Mr. President, it is quite inconvenient for those who have scheduled visits to Geneva. The third point that I would like to make is that, if the Conference decides to accept the proposal made by the distinguished delegate of Morocco, then the Western Group will not stand in the way.

The PRESIDENT: Does the Coordinator of the Eastern Group have a position?

Mr. BERDENNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): First of all, we agree with the considerations which have just been expressed by the distinguished representative of the Western Group. Unfortunately, I have to inform you that for the reasons which you yourself have mentioned, no consensus has yet been reached in our group on this matter.

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador Zahran, when can we have an indication about the decision taken in the Commission on Human Rights?

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): I think that I am not the spokesman of the Human Rights Commission. There is a bureau there and Morocco, as the current Chairman of OIC, the Islamic Conference, would raise it there as that delegation raised it here. We think that the Conference on Disarmament, notwithstanding what the Western Group said, is a body which was created by SSOD-I, a General Assembly special session, and we think that we have to abide by the conference services of the United Nations. Is there already a resolution adopted to that effect? Yes, it was adopted, it was referred to by the representative of Morocco and we think that the secretariat should have taken care of that in implementation of that resolution. As it is observed here, it should be observed there, in the Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. BABAR (Pakistan): First of all, my delegation fully supports the proposal made by the distinguished representative of Morocco. It is an occasion of great importance to all Muslims around the world. It has the same significance as 25 December, on which we do observe a holiday. I was a little amazed by the remark of the Western Group Coordinator that we are not bound by United Nations General Assembly resolutions. I am amazed because of the selectivity of using this argument. We have heard that in the case of "cut-off", it was a consensus resolution and, therefore, should be accepted by all. Here we have an argument that it is not binding on us; I totally agree it is not binding on us. So my point is that, whatever we do here in the Conference on Disarmament, we should have one principle to abide by. We should not use these arguments selectively, so I would again request that we consider this proposal seriously and we give it a second thought because it would have implications on other things that happen in the CD.

Mr. ECHARIF (Algeria) (translated from French): Obviously my delegation supports the suggestion made by the delegation of Morocco on behalf of the Islamic Group. Now with regard to the reaction of the Western Group, we agree with our colleague from Pakistan that saying that a General Assembly resolution does not commit the Conference on Disarmament is something that is so uncommon and so unusual that at the very least it would be worth highlighting in the report that the Conference on Disarmament will submit to the General Assembly at the end of the year. In that context I would just like to say that my delegation will insist on next Thursday not being a working day.

Mr. WIRANATA-ATMADJA (Indonesia): Mr. President, my delegation wishes to place on record that Indonesia will wholeheartedly support the proposal of Morocco, and at the same time we would like to request you and this body to seriously consider the proposal put forward.

Mr. DON NANJIRA (Kenya): I am a Catholic; I am not a Muslim, I am a Catholic. I am talking on a point of principle. I think we cannot afford to have an argument over religious issues based on some of the arguments that I have heard here. It is surprising to hear the comment being made that we are the Conference here and, therefore, what the General Assembly does does not bind us. That is a very peculiar argument. Why? Because we here who belong to this Conference represent exactly the same Governments that are Members of the United Nations; there are not two sets of countries belonging to the CD and the General Assembly, so that is not a good argument and I hope we are not going to argue like that. Personally, I think that it was not necessary to have a break to consider this. I think we should have just decided that this is something just like 25 December. Catholics will argue strongly that 25 December be a public holiday and it has always been a public holiday, and those of us here on religious grounds who believe that this day is important should have it. I do not know how many are going to speak on Thursday; there may be two like today, now surely we cannot make this into a big issue. So I would urge that since the Western Group has said that they would have no problem - they have said that - I would call upon you to end the discussion here and just decide that on Thursday we shall not have plenary and that, as requested by Morocco, we have it on Tuesday. There are other more important things to discuss here than belabouring this question.

The PRESIDENT: If the discussion had taken place in my family grounds, I would have solved it very quickly. However, if we look at the global picture, the situation seems to be that somehow - and I have to make it understood - most of us are not familiar with these holidays about which we learned only this morning. I can understand that some delegates who were discussing the difficult problems of the timetable at 9 a.m. this morning, trying to avoid duplication, parallel meetings, etc., are now quite surprised that after having discussed it for one hour, they now have to review all their planning. The second thing is that this resolution is recent, i.e. December 1994, and it clearly states what has already been read out by the delegate of Morocco. I checked with the secretariat and in 1993 the Conference took a favourable decision on such an issue. We gave time to the coordinators to think about this issue with their delegations. We now have a positive attitude of the Group of 21, of China, and an indication from

(The President)

the Western Group that the problem is not insurmountable and a practical solution can certainly be studied. Due to the information formally announced that an important visitor was scheduled to come to Geneva to attend two important functions, I think that it is a matter of courtesy that we allow for the delegation which has a real problem to contact its office and report and tell us with all the elements that he has in his hands. Naturally, we will take into consideration the feelings which have been expressed around the table, and I do not think that it would be advisable to have a table like this in which we have many, many countries not attending. I think it is not in the interest of the CD and probably it is also not in the interest of the personality coming, so I think it is important to take into consideration a fact, a true fact of life. So I really think that if a decision cannot be taken this morning, considering the matter very urgent, I would propose to convene Presidential consultations this afternoon at 5 p.m. so as to come to a clear decision. In the meantime, those delegations which have a real problem due to the scheduling of meetings can naturally contact their capitals. I would suggest this formula which is the normal and correct formula to obtain the opinions of participants to the Conference.

I give the floor to the delegate of Morocco.

Mr. ZNIBER (Morocco) (translated from French): I apologize for taking the floor again. Mr. President, you have asked the Conference to take a more or less formal decision on this matter and you intend to organize consultations this afternoon to try to find a solution. In that case will we have to reconvene the Conference in plenary session in order to formalize the decision, which I hope will take account of the arguments put forward in favour of rescheduling the meetings planned for next Thursday? I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that you referred to the decision that was taken last year; that was also a similar situation because it was agreed that a Minister whose visit had been agreed on should speak on a similar date. Despite that, and I was going to say fortunately, a solution was found, and I hope that the same will be true this time.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Is it possible to reach a consensus without waiting for this afternoon? I will make my concluding statement, which will last about 20 minutes, and that should enable the delegation of Hungary to contact its capital in order to ensure that the Deputy State Secretary will be able to address the Conference on Friday 3 March. I give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. OMAR (Ethiopia): Just a point of clarification and information. The Bureau of the Human Rights Commission at the beginning of the session decided not to extend daily meetings beyond 5.30 p.m. At the same time it was also decided not to have meetings on Thursday, which is Id al-Fitr.

The PRESIDENT: This is a very important element for our information. There are no meetings of the Human Rights Commission on Thursday. There is a precedent in 1993 that the secretariat mentioned to me, so I think these are very relevant elements which have to be taken into account. I do not wish to put pressure on anybody - if, after my closing remarks, the delegation or delegations which still need time have the possibility to give an answer, then

(The President)

they give their answer and we can make it formal. If this is not possible, I have no other choice but to hold Presidential consultations at 5 p.m. and, naturally, there will be a gentleman's agreement that whatever will be decided there will be formalized at the next plenary meeting, which could be held on Tuesday. The secretariat suggests that if the Conference agrees now that the results of the Presidential consultations that could take place at 5 p.m. this afternoon - if we do not find a solution before - whatever will be the result, if there is consensus, is going to be somehow the formal schedule that we are going to follow; if the Conference so decides, we have solved our problem. If there is no objection to this method I think that I would follow such a procedure, that is to say, I hope that we shall arrive at a consensus on this matter before the end of this morning's plenary. If the delegations express that they could not give a consensus immediately or at the end of this morning, I have the possibility of Presidential consultations at 5 p.m. But then, if the Conference accepts what is going to be the result of these consultations - i.e. I hope, consensus - this is going to be somehow the schedule approved for next week. That is a way out to give more time to those delegations which have a difficulty. I think that this is the formula, but I can again raise the issue once I have finished with the remaining business. I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. BABAR (Pakistan): Sorry for taking the floor again. I take the floor with respect to the programme of work for next week. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances, my delegation will not be in a position to accept any parallel meetings. We have done that as a compromise, a great compromise, but until we have a solution to 2 March, this has to be kept in abeyance.

The PRESIDENT: The situation is very clear. So, I invite the delegations which have some difficulty to really try to get an answer so as to allow us to reach a conclusion before the end of this formal meeting. I give the floor to the representative of Iran.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Needless to say, my delegation is fully supportive of the proposal by Morocco. I believe it would perhaps be useful to suggest that, when we have had on previous occasions eminent personalities who wished to visit the CD, we have arranged plenary meetings on other days, and particularly on Tuesdays, and therefore the delegation which is concerned with this matter could probably take into account to have a plenary on Tuesday, and I think that will put us in a safer place and on that basis we may be able to achieve consensus easier. What remains is Working Group 2, which for the time being is indicated for Thursday afternoon - we have Friday afternoon open right now according to this programme, so I think we can decide at least for that part of it to transfer the Working Group to Friday afternoon, so the only question that would remain, therefore, would be a final answer from the delegation concerned.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you very much, Ambassador Nasseri, for your wise suggestion. I would like now to ask the following. This is really a question where sensitivity is fundamental. I think we have to take into account the real emotions, the real sentiments, the real beliefs of each one of us. This is a very delicate and serious matter in which there is no way that one can be ironic or not sensitive to such an issue. I have a feeling that practically

(The President)

there is a convergence of views, that this is not insurmountable and we can find a solution and the solution which is being indicated, to have the plenary on Tuesday, is one which has been followed many times and that would solve the problem clearly.

Mr. BOYTHA (Hungary): First of all, I wish to express deep appreciation to all those who have expressed the views not to work on the day of the religious holiday. This is an important fact of religious tolerance for which we are all combating here and all over the world; this is an important human right and we want to respect it. The problem arose simply because the information about the possible changes in the timetable of the CD has been announced a little bit late, so that preparations had already been made, but since this is a generally accepted proposal now not to have meetings on 2 March and we have learned, and I guess it is already decided actually, that not even the Human Rights Commission will sit on 2 March. Of course, I cannot speak on behalf of the Eastern European and Eastern Group in general, but what I can say is that we should not put any obstacle in the way of not having the plenary on the originally scheduled day, i.e. on 2 March. If it was possible, we would prefer 3 March because of having to rearrange the plans of the Deputy State Secretary who intended to come and whose speech has already been scheduled for the 2nd in both meetings, in the Human Rights Commission and in the Conference on Disarmament, without any warning that there would be no meeting. So I now leave it up to the secretariat and to the Conference if it is possible to have the meeting on 3 March and we do not insist on having it on the 2nd, both out of respect for the Muslim faith and for the Conference's work, we should have a Conference where all those who are members of the Conference are present and listen to the speech which is intended to be delivered by a high-level Hungarian politician.

Mr. ZNIBER (Morocco) (translated from French): I apologize for taking the floor yet again. It was just to say that my delegation very warmly supports the proposal made by Ambassador Boytha that we should hold a plenary meeting on Friday, 3 March, and my delegation will be very happy to hear His Excellency the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Hungary who will come to make a statement during that morning.

The PRESIDENT: The secretariat, very helpful as always, tells me that it is going to be very feasible to reschedule the plenary meeting so as to take into account the consideration which has been made and to take into due account the request made by the representatives of the Islamic world. I am very thankful because I understand that also the Eastern Group accedes favourably to this request, so that the representative of Morocco would like to tell you that the CD agrees and Thursday is going to be a holiday and we extend our best wishes to all of you of the Islamic faith and we will, together with the secretariat, arrange for a revised version of the timetable of meetings which we are going to circulate. The secretariat informs me that it will be distributed this afternoon.

I give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. EKWALL (Sweden): Of course the solution which has been proposed is acceptable to my delegation. I would just like to have a confirmation on behalf of my Ambassador, who is the Chairman of Working Group 1 of the NTB Committee. Would the meeting of Working Group 1 on Friday morning follow right after the plenary?

The PRESIDENT: This is an excellent proposal. Working Group 1 will indeed follow after the plenary on Friday, 3 March.

My conclusions are that there is consensus of the Conference. I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Ramaker.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): We also have a problem with Working Group 2 of the NTB Committee, but I think we should refer to that in the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee. This is one of the problems I referred to earlier that we have to somehow see to.

The PRESIDENT Yes, we shall deal with this together with the secretariat. I had hoped that we would be able to make progress on the pending issues contained in the Presidential statement covering the agenda and organization of the 1995 session. However, despite all efforts, it appears that further consultations will be needed in order to overcome remaining difficulties. Therefore, it will be up to my successor in this function, Ambassador Kurokochi of Japan, to pursue these issues and, in this respect, I should like to assure her that I shall be at her entire disposal for any assistance she may require.

As my term of office as President of this Conference will end tomorrow, I should like to take this opportunity of making a few concluding remarks.

(continued in French)

I shall be brief and sincere. My presidency will not go down in the history of the Conference on Disarmament, except perhaps on one point: the fact that my presidency has involved an amendment to the rules of procedure of the Conference. I was granted the honour and the privilege of presiding over the Conference from 1 January, and I therefore had the pleasure of dealing with the problems of the whole Conference for a few extra weeks compared with my predecessors. I had hoped that the fact of having a few extra weeks might have given me an advantage - worries, yes but hope too. Unfortunately the realities of life (as we have just seen, for example, with the timetable for next week) did not enable me to have all the time necessary to consult my colleagues for whom I have what the Romans called a timor reverentialis, a very special respect, in view of the fact that almost all my colleagues all have much greater experience than my own, and probably much greater wisdom than my own.

Most of my colleagues were not in Geneva for a long period, because they were either at the Toronto seminar or in New York for the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This is why I suggested the adoption of a method which I hope was appreciated by the participants and the observers, that is, the organization,

(The President)

side by side with the Presidential consultations (the consultations that all my predecessors have always followed), of an open-ended, informal, frank exchange of views, in order to grasp the concerns, the expectations, the hopes of each of you. I did this with the members and with the observers at the Conference, and as I found this method effective and the machinery for Presidential consultations rather rigid, I thought it was a good idea to open the discussion additionally during informal debates, on top of the plenary sessions. This enabled me, and I hope everybody else too, to gain a better understanding of the positions of each one of us.

What was the result of this method? Of course, everybody may have a different vision of things. We know that a bottle may look half full to one person and half empty to another, but there is no doubt that the essential concern of the entire international community, expressed through United Nations resolutions, the will to continue negotiations rapidly to move towards a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, that has been achieved; we succeeded during the first week of the session in restarting the negotiations on the treaty. It was also possible, after lengthy, very serious and very thorough discussion (and I am very grateful to the delegations that participated in this discussion), to adopt the agenda for the 1995 session. Naturally, part of the Presidential statement remained on paper, and I want to give you my assessment in this regard, so that at least at the end of this experience you will know what I feel.

I am firmly convinced that the efforts made by Ambassador Shannon, who was urged by all of us to continue his work towards a mandate in order to set up as soon as possible an ad hoc committee on prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, will be crowned with success. I know that Ambassador Shannon is continuing his negotiations effectively and we will have specific proposals before us shortly; consequently I think that light is beginning to appear at the end of the tunnel as far as this issue is concerned. Of course, in the Presidential statement I expressed a hope for the speedy establishment of the three ad hoc committees which had already been in operation in 1994. I am convinced that it is essential to re-establish as soon as possible the Ad Hoc Committee entrusted with achieving effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. It is not possible to approach such an important meeting as the Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons without some progress being made in the field of negative security assurances, but at the same time I am convinced that an ad hoc committee should be established as quickly as possible to discuss, negotiate and make progress on the subject of conventional weapons. I think that, for world public opinion, the Conference on Disarmament may seem like something rather abstract if the weapons which cause blood to be spilt throughout the world somehow have no right to be discussed in this forum. Those who say that it is not possible to move forward along the path of cooperation and collaboration, in order to try to make progress in the area of conventional arms regulation, are not speaking seriously.

Naturally, it is also essential to re-establish the committee on prevention of an arms race in space.

(The President)

I would have liked to re-establish these three ad hoc committees as of the first week with their existing mandates, but it did not prove possible to reach agreement. I hope that my successor will be more fortunate in this area.

The other points I wish to mention have to do with two fundamental aspects for the life of our Conference. One is the expansion of the membership of the Conference. During my term in the Chair, the Italian Government has taken diplomatic steps in several capitals to emphasize the importance of a speedy solution to this issue. It is difficult to believe that the treaty on a nuclear test ban, a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material can be concluded if the problem of the expansion of the Conference has not been solved first. Expansion is a guarantee that the exercise we are engaged in can be concluded with an objective of universality, and that the States which are interested in it (and they have clearly indicated their interest in our work since they have been observers of our work for years and they make a remarkable contribution to our efforts) will play a full part in our negotiations.

The agenda of the Conference is important too and for two sessions we have heard the concerns of the various parties in order to bring it up to date. I hope a special coordinator can work as quickly as possible to submit a progress report to us before the end of the session so as to guide us in our discussions, to be ready to have ideas for a new Conference agenda which can win a consensus approval.

As regards the improved and effective functioning of the Conference I have an announcement to make to you. I have been requested by Ambassador Kamal to inform you officially of the conversation I had with him yesterday afternoon. Ambassador Kamal told me that officially he is going to be leaving Geneva on 16 March and that as a result he will not have an opportunity to pursue his activities as Chairman of those consultations. I have noted his communication and I believe that I am interpreting the feelings of the members of the Conference when I convey our thanks to Ambassador Kamal. I have learned much during the conversations I have had with Ambassador Kamal, particularly during the period last year when he chaired the consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference with wisdom and masterly ability. I am grateful to him. We are witnessing the departure of a leading spirit of this Conference, and it is with a certain sadness that we see Ambassador Kamal leaving this forum. I would request the representative of Pakistan to convey my sentiments to Ambassador Kamal.

Finally, I would like to say that I have addressed myself, in a quite committed way, to the question of the admission of Slovakia as a member of our Conference. It has been said that I have done so with excessive speed; but I am convinced that the case of Slovakia is a very specific question, which raises no legal problems, is not related to the problem of expansion, and is really a case where political morality is sovereign. I experienced great fellow feeling with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia and our colleague the Ambassador, who were really quite extraordinarily persuasive; they have convinced us that this case should be settled in a positive manner as soon as possible.

(The President)

It now remains for me to thank the Secretary-General, Vladimir Petrovsky, Dr. Abdel Kader Bensmail and all the staff of the secretariat, the interpreters, for their patience. I would also like to mention my predecessor, Ambassador Nasseri, who has always cooperated to try to help me to find a way out of difficult situations. He has always done so with good humour, readiness to help, with great savoir faire, and I am grateful to him. I am also grateful to the former representative of China, who helped us during the Presidential consultations, and I reiterate my best wishes to the new representative of China. If, since the first week, we have managed to make progress, to get things moving for the negotiation of the nuclear-test-ban treaty, it was because we benefited from the legacy of Ambassador Marín Bosch. A legacy passed on to Ambassador Dembinski, with the two chairmen of the working groups, Ambassadors Norberg and Ramaker, their "Friends of the Chair" as well as Dr. Peter Marshall, who, with his "tigers", tamed our experts wonderfully so as to produce concrete results.

It remains for me to say that I would have hoped to accomplish what I have done while remaining objective (in so far as a man can be so), tolerant, calm and transparent. I apologize if I did not always succeed in this regard. I would have hoped to leave my successor a less burdensome legacy. I also leave her my best wishes for success, so that we can conclude very quickly what I have not been able to conclude. I thank you all for your patience. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Friday, 3 March at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.